



**Legislative Department
Seattle City Council
Memorandum**

Date: February 10, 2012
To: Government Performance and Finance Committee
From: Patricia Lee, Council Central Staff

Subject: C.B. 117395. Approval of the Families & Education Levy Implementation and Evaluation Plans

Central Staff Recommendations: The City Council provided policy guidance for the 2011 Levy through Resolution 31206, which created a process to develop a 2011 Levy, and through Ordinance 123567, which requested Seattle voters to consider a property tax Levy to support student academic achievement.

Staff finds that the proposed Implementation and Evaluation Plan (Plan) is consistent with the policy principles set forth in Resolution 31206 and Ordinance 123567 and that it meets the requirements of Ordinance 123567. Staff recommends that Council request OFE include a review of the Plan in its Annual Report and present the Annual Report to both the Levy Oversight Committee (LOC) and to Council's Government Performance and Finance Committee.

Introduction. Ordinance 123567 requires Council approval, by ordinance, of a Plan for all Families and Education Levy (Levy) funded programs and strategies. The Plan must set forth the criteria, measurable outcomes and methodology by which Levy-funded programs will be selected and evaluated and states Council's intent that all Levy-funded programs be awarded through a competitive process. This memo addresses the proposed Plan and its: 1) consistency with the policy direction previously provided by the City Council, 2) key features of the selection criteria and process, and 3) the evaluation methodology of both individual programs and the overall Levy.

In 2011 Seattle voters approved the 4th seven year Levy. The 2011-2018 Levy authorizes the collection of \$231 million dollars of property tax to support the academic achievement of Seattle's students. The Levy has three main goals:

- Promote school readiness and learning
- Support academic achievement and reduce the academic achievement gap
- Prepare high school graduates for college and/or the career of their choice

To achieve these Levy goals the City must also:

- Identify the policy principles that will guide the investment of Levy funds,
- Identify and implement programs that effectively meet the identified needs, and
- Accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented programs and strategies at meeting Levy goals and make modifications or changes as needed.

Council's policy guidance is discussed in Section I of this memo.

The Executive's proposed Plan provides an extensive explanation of the selection criteria and process they will use to select Levy-funded programs, how they address student's identified needs and how programs will be evaluated and modified as needed. The selection criteria and evaluation are discussed in Sections II and III of this memo.

I. The Levy Implementation and Evaluation Plan (Plan) is Consistent with Council's Policy Direction.

Council's key policy and funding principles, as set forth in Resolution 31206 and Ordinance 123567, are listed below in italics followed by how the proposed Plan addresses them. The Resolution and Ordinance are attached to this memo for ease of reference.

A. Clarity of purpose. What is the City trying to achieve with Levy-funded programs?

The end goal of the Levy is for all students to have the opportunity to obtain the education and skills necessary to become adults who can actively participate in their community, be effective civic actors and contribute to Seattle's strong economy. In developing the 2011 Levy it became clear that the previous Levy goal of high school graduation was an insufficient aspiration. Accordingly, the Levy goal was revised to "helping prepare high school graduates for collage and/or the career of their choice." This goal can not be achieved unless students are academically successful throughout their school years. Therefore, the previous Levy goals of helping all students be ready for school, helping all students succeed academically and reducing the academic achievement gap were retained.

B. Longitudinal approach. Levy resources should identify and address student needs from pre-kindergarten to post high school graduation.

Similar to previous Levies, the 2011 Levy funds programs and services that help students be successful from pre-kindergarten to post-high school. However, in the 2004 Levy,-funding for programs at the elementary and high school levels was limited with more significant investments at middle school. In addition, students were free to attend schools throughout the City making it difficult to provide consistent or cumulative services. Now that students are assigned to their neighborhood schools, and investments at all grade levels have been increased there is a greater likelihood that some students will receive assistance from Levy-funded programs through a longer period of their time in school, allowing a greater continuity of support.

The main areas the Levy will invest in are:

- School readiness and early learning
- Academic achievement in elementary school

- Academic achievement and college/career preparation in middle school
- Academic achievement and college/career preparation in high school
- Student health
- Research and evaluation

C. Levy-funded strategies and resources should be aligned with other academic success efforts.

The Community Center for Education Results (CCER) has brought together leadership in the Puget Sound region to double the number of students in South King County and South Seattle who are on track to graduate from college or earn a career credential by 2020. To meet this goal CCER has created a Road Map for Education Results. The City has actively participated in this collective effort to improve student academic outcomes. The City has used CCER's Road Map to draft Seattle's Road Map to Success aligning CCER milestones with the School District scorecard goals. In addition, the City and School District have ongoing discussions on how Levy-funded programs can supplement, strengthen and complement the School District's Strategic Plan and other key academic initiatives.

D. Focus on students at risk academically.

Levy resources will be focused on students who are underachieving academically in schools with a large population of students with academic challenges, or in schools with an overall low performance record.

E. Focused efforts. Levy resources should be focused on critical needs and transition points in a child's pathway from pre-kindergarten to post high school.

Levy resources will continue to be targeted at critical academic and developmental milestones that students must achieve for long term academic success. Focusing on these critical milestones will allow a deeper and more robust effort to strengthen selected skills rather than trying to do a little bit of everything. The critical academic and social emotional skills and transition points are identified in Seattle's Road Map to Success.

F. Innovative. Levy-funded strategies should explore new ways to address student academic needs.

Ordinance 123567 identified the Community Partnership Fund as a major Levy element, allowing for new school or community based partnerships and approaches. To date, this element has not been developed and is not addressed in the current Plan but can be developed over the course of the Levy.

II. Key Features of the Selection Criteria and Process for Selecting Levy-Funded Programs.

The Executive has provided a detailed explanation of the criteria, and process for selecting Levy funded programs. Below are some of the key features of this new approach.

A. Stronger Integration of Levy Funded Programs with School and Community Efforts.

To help students succeed the Levy has historically funded programs that address student's academic and social-emotional needs. These services were provided by both community based organizations and city departments.

In the 2004 Levy the City used its position as funder to encourage a more intentional integration of Levy-funded programs with school strategies to support academically struggling middle school students. The success of this effort required strong leadership by the City, participating schools and community providers, a shared goal, a common methodology for evaluating program effectiveness, and funding flexibility by the City.

The 2011 Levy expands this effective approach to elementary and high school investments. Schools will be asked to identify their students who need help academically, and propose strategies or programs that are aligned with their classroom strategies and effective in addressing specific barriers to learning. Schools may identify non-school providers as the best way to address some of those needs. Expansion of an integrated strategy will continue to require strong leadership by the City, participating schools and providers. It will also require a commitment to adhere to a common goal and methodology for measuring the effectiveness of the services and programs implemented to address specific student needs.

To help schools identify effective resources, the City will develop a list of providers, through an RFQ process, that have the ability to successfully help children improve academically. Schools may only use providers from that list for their Levy funded strategies.

The City is not handing over Levy program funding decisions to the schools. The City will approve all school plans and all Levy-funding. However, having the schools intentionally choose the out-of-classroom strategies and providers that will complement and strengthen their school efforts is intended to help each school develop a plan that is responsive to their needs, foster stronger communication between school personnel and providers and strengthen the sense of shared responsibility for students academic success.

Community based organizations provide many valuable programs in the schools with many sources of funding other than the Levy. It is anticipated and expected this will continue. Programs not supported by the Levy will not be subject to Levy requirements.

- B. *Use of Data.* All schools and providers will be required to report data on the students they serve and to use the data effectively to evaluate whether their program is achieving the intended results. These data requirements are consistent with the School District's use of data to assess student performance and the City's contracting requirements that providers report the outcomes obtained with city funding. These reporting requirements are not new. The data will be used to evaluate not whether a program or service was provided but whether the service or program improved a student's academic outcomes.
- C. *Performance Based Contracts.* The Office for Education (OFE) develops and monitors all Levy-funding through contracts with community based organizations, City Departments, the School District or Public Health Seattle-King County. All contracts set out the performance targets the provider must meet and a portion of the contract amount is earned by meeting those performance targets.
- D. *Competitively Bid.* Ordinance 123567 expressed Council's intent that all Levy-funded programs be awarded through a competitive process. The Plan identifies a range of Request for Investment processes that will be used to select Levy-funded programs. There are areas that will be awarded through a direct contract to the Seattle Public Schools such as middle school athletics and transportation. For Student Health services, the City will contract with Public Health-Seattle & King County (PHSKC) to administer Levy health investments. Existing providers of school district health services will be required to submit a plan with specific service delivery requirements. New health services for elementary and interagency students and dental enhancement services will be competitively bid.

Contracts for less than \$5000.00 will not be required to go through a competitive bid process.

- E. *Levy Oversight Committee.* The 2011 Levy Oversight Committee (LOC) consists of twelve members: the Mayor, the Council member committee chair with oversight of education issues, the Superintendent of the School District, a member of the School District Board and eight citizens. The Council has confirmed all citizen members. The LOC reviewed and discussed the Plan at its January 10, 2012 meeting and recommends its approval by Council.

III. Evaluation

The 2011 Levy continues the use of the Outcome Funding Model used in the 2004 Levy. Continuation of the same evaluation methodology provides consistency for providers and the ability for the City to make longitudinal comparisons.

The Outcome Funding Model rests on the identification of overarching goals or outcomes, numeric targets and interim benchmarks. The outcomes were developed with the assistance of the Levy Advisory Committee that helped develop the 2011 Levy and are based on research, best practices and experience. Each Levy-funded program has identified targets and benchmarks.

Providers are required to provide regular data on how they are meeting these targets and benchmarks. The LOC reviews and provides input on the annual targets set for each Levy-funded program. This approach allows the City to evaluate whether specific programs are meeting their targets and to make changes if they are not.

The Outcome Funding Model will not indicate whether Levy funded programs are the most effective programs or what would happen if these programs were not offered. In other words, there is not a control group in the classic sense of evaluation. Such an evaluation would probably require a longitudinal study longer than this seven year Levy. Although not a classic evaluation model with a control group the following evaluation efforts are in place:

- A. *School District Performance Data.* The School District now provides a District wide Score card, a school report on every school and student performance at every grade by race, income level and English language ability. This provides information on students in schools that do not have Levy-funded programs and serves as a rough proxy for what would happen if Levy interventions were not in place. It will also provide annual information on whether there has been a change in a school's overall performance.
- B. *Ongoing Monitoring.* The City's Office for Education (OFE) regularly reviews data from all Levy funded programs for progress in meeting program targets and benchmarks. OFE compiles both a midyear and Annual Report on the Levy. This information is reviewed by the LOC. Review of the Plan should be made part of this Annual Report.
- C. *Council Oversight.* Council reviews the Levy budget as part of its annual budget review and adoption. However, this is a fiscal not performance review. Council should request the OFE to present the Levy Annual Report, including an update on the status of the Plan, to Council's Government Performance and Finance Committee.

Conclusion.

The proposed Plan is consistent with the policy principles set forth in Resolution 31206 and Ordinance 123567 and meets the requirements of Ordinance 123567. Staff recommends that OFE include a review of the Plan in its Annual Report and present the Annual Report to both the LOC and Council's Government Performance and Finance Committee.

Attachments:

Resolution 31206

Ordinance 123567

